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TWO WINDOWS IN THE CATHEDRAL OF FLORENCE

DURING a hurried visit to Florence in 1896 my attention was attracted to a series of very interesting windows in the Cathedral, which, so far as I can learn, have never been reproduced. Having obtained the necessary permit, I photographed with quite inadequate facilities two of the windows in the drum of the cupola, at the same time making careful notes of their details and coloring. Unfortunately I had no time to observe carefully the other windows or to take other photographs. It is not a little strange that neither of these windows has been reproduced before, as one of them is unique in being the only window designed by Donatello, while the other illustrates a little known phase of the art of Lorenzo Ghiberti, or, perhaps, of Paolo Uccello.

The octagonal drum of the cupola is lighted by eight circular windows, each some 4.50 m. in diameter. Seven of them still contain painted glass. There seems to have been no general scheme in the arrangement of these windows, although when we consider them chronologically the earliest will be seen to refer to the Virgin; the next three refer to the closing scenes of the Life of Christ, and the last four to the early history of the Life of Christ. The windows were put in place in the following order:

1. *The Coronation of the Virgin.* Designed by Donatello, April 14, 1434. Executed by Bernardo (di Francesco), assisted by Paolo Uccello, October 4, 1434.

2. *The Resurrection.* Designer not recorded. Executed by Bernardo di Francesco, January 15, 1443.

3. *The Agony in the Garden.* Design claimed by Ghiberti. Executed by Bernardo di Francesco, February 28, 1443.

4. *The Ascension*. Design claimed by Ghiberti. Executed by Bernardo di Francesco, January 15, 1444.

5. *The Annunciation*. Designed by Paolo Uccello, February 18, 1443. Executed by Bernardo di Francesco, December 30, 1444–January 19, 1445. This window no longer exists.

6. *The Nativity*. Designed by Paolo Uccello, November 5, 1443. Executed by Angelo di Lippo, June 30, 1444 (?).

7. *The Adoration of the Magi*. Designer not recorded. Possibly by Paolo Uccello, January 28, 1445. Executed possibly by Angelo di Lippo, March 6, 1445.

8. *The Presentation in the Temple*. Designed by Ghiberti, December 7, 1443. Executed by Bernardo di Francesco, June 18, 1445.¹

Let us now consider in detail the two windows of which we publish reproductions.

1. **The Coronation Window.** — This window occupies the position of honor, but is unfortunately so covered with the dust of ages that a photographic reproduction leaves much of its design undecipherable. This makes it the more necessary that we should study it by the aid of strong glasses from the gallery of the dome. It then appears that this dusky framework is enlivened with a series of winged cherub heads. They are not naturalistically, but conventionally colored—like the cherub heads in Giottesque paintings. Each has an ornamented golden nimbus, the white edges of which define the position of the cherub heads in our illustration. The lowest cherub to our left is red, the next above is greenish gray, the third is red, the fourth is light brown, the fifth red, and the sixth blue. A rigid symmetry would call for two more, but the design of the central medallion overlaps the frame. Regardless of the distance from which the window would be seen, the cherub wings and the hair of their heads show very carefully painted detail.

When we turn from the frame to the central medallion, we are impressed with the great simplicity of its composition.

¹ For the dates here given see the Appendix to Dr. Hans Semper's 'Die farbigen Glasscheiben im Dom von Florenz,' published in the *Mitth. d. K. K. Central-Commission*, 1872, pp. 19–36. The dates are those of partial payments, and are taken from the Cathedral archives entitled *Libro di Deliberatione e Stantiamenti degli Operai di Santa Maria del Fiore*, etc.

There is no canopied throne to distract our attention, no landscape background. There is nothing but the blue sky to act as a setting for the two figures, who are clad in great simplicity. The words of the Psalmist (Ps. xlv. 9), "*Astitit regina a dextris tuis in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate,*" had become



FIGURE 1. — CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN : DONATELLO.

embodied in the Catholic ritual, and are here accepted almost literally. The Virgin, leaning forward with folded hands, is clad in a golden garment which is ornamented only by a narrow embroidered border. The end of the throne or bench on which she is seated has pearl and cyma and dentil mouldings, showing a timid preference for Renaissance details. Her footstool is ornamented with a simple reticulated pattern. The Christ,

seated on the same throne, places upon her head a crown of gold, set with rubies and sapphires. The Christ wears a royal red mantel, lined with white, over a green robe with violet sleeves. The mantel has an ornamented golden border. His nimbus is divided into red, golden, and violet sections, elaborately decorated, as if the window were to be set not in the drum of a lofty dome, but near enough to be appreciated by the worshipful spectator.

The authorship of this window has never been called in question. There seems to have been a competition in which Ghiberti and Donatello were asked to furnish designs to a jury composed of theologians and painters and makers of stained glass windows. The design of Donatello was accepted April 14, 1434, and is thus recorded in the Cathedral archives (*Libro di Deliberatione e Stantiamenti degli Operai di Sta. Maria del Fiore*): "Prefati operarii congregati in loco eorum residentie prefactis dicte opere utili pagendis servatis servandis attendentes ad duo designa facta ad instantiam opere super imo quorum fieri debet oculus vitrei storie et actus incoronationis Domini nostri Jesu Christi facti eius et matris virginis Marie videlicet unam per Donatum Nicolai et Laurentium Bartoli et ad quedam consilia habita a quam pluribus intelligentibus et magistris v. sacre theologie et a pluribus pictoribus et magistris fenestrarum et oculorum vitrei de declarando et consulendo quale victorum duorum designorum est pulchrius et honorabilius pro ecclesia et magnificentius tante ecclesie et intellecto per dicta consilia designum factum per dictum Donatum esse melius honorabilius et magnificentius designo facto per dictum Laurentium Bartoli deliberaverunt quod dictum designum factum per dictum Donatum Nicolai oculi vitrei fiendi super oculo existenti supra cappellam S. Zenobii et qui est coram corpore ecclesie veteris fiat et fieri debeat et non secundum designum dicti Laurentii et non possit fieri dictus oculus cum aliquo alio designo nec solvent dumtaxat cum designo dicti Donati Nicolai."¹

¹ Published by H. Semper in Eitelberger von Edelberg's *Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte*, IX, pp. 282 f.

This record establishes not only that Donatello made a design of the "Coronation of the Virgin" for a circular window to be located above the chapel of S. Zenobius, but that the design was accepted, judged to be finer than the design furnished by Lorenzo Ghiberti, and that a decision was reached that the window should be made in accordance with this design.

The window would seem to have been begun in the same year, as we may infer from a document published also by H. Semper in Eitelberger von Edelberg's *Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte*, IX, p. 283, No. 76, copied from the *Opera del Duomo; Liber Quadron, Carta xxxi*, under the date October 4, 1434. It reads as follows: "Donato di Niccolò maestro d' intaglio de avere a di 4 d' ottobre fior. 18 larghi per uno disegno d' un occhio alla Capella di S. Zenobio e quali sono per lui e per Bernardo (di Francesco) e per Pagholo Uccello." This document shows that a certain Bernardo and Paolo Uccello were associated with Donatello in the execution of this window: Bernardo being probably Bernardo di Francesco, elsewhere styled a *magister vetrorum*, and Paolo Uccello, elsewhere called *pictor*, employed to paint either upon the cartoon or upon the glass such details as might be called for by the designer.¹

The knowledge that this window was by Donatello was retained by the fifteenth-century Anonimo del Codice Magliabecchiano.²

In 1550, Vasari, in his *Vita di Donato*, describes this circular window of Donatello's as having "maggior forza in se, che gli altri da diversi maestri disegnati," which statement, in the edition of 1568, he modifies to "il quale disegno è tanto migliore di quelli, che sono negl' altri occhi, quanto manifestamenti si

¹ Milanese, *Vasari*, II, p. 402, note 2, declares that this window was executed by Domenico di Piero di Pisa, assisted by Angelo di Lippo. Cavallucci, *Santa Maria del Fiore*, p. 148, makes a similar statement. The entries of the Cathedral archives, published by Semper, *Mitth. d. K. K. Central-Comm.*, 1872, p. 34, indicate that the circular windows made by Domenico and Angelo at this period were *oculi albi*, or of uncolored glass.

² Carl Frey, *Sammlung ausgewählter Biographien Vasari's*: III, *Vita di Lorenzo Ghiberti*, p. 64. Berlin, 1886.

vede." The preference of the judges for Donatello's design was thus accepted by Vasari, and in recent times by H. Semper, who in his *Donatello's Leben und Werke*, Innsbruck, 1887, pp. 63-64, declares: "In der That ist Donatello's Glasgemälde das schönste im Tambour und übertrifft selbst die im Jahre 1443 nach Paolo Uccello's Cartons gemalten Scheiben. Auf Donatello's Gemälden zeichnen sich die Figuren bei etwas tiefen, mehr malerisch als in strengen Glasmalerstil gehaltenen Farbentönen, durch einfache grosse Umrisse, durch Ernst und Innigkeit der Bewegung und des Ausdrucks, sowie durch feine Detailbelebung aus." With the general spirit of this estimate we cordially concur.

2. The Resurrection Window. — Adjoining the Coronation window is a window representing the Resurrection of Christ. Of all the windows in the drum it is the most brilliant in color and effective in design. The Christ is rising, as if uplifted by some supernatural force, from an open sarcophagus from which the cover has just been removed. On either side is an armed soldier sleeping. The background consists of rocks, symbolic rather than naturalistic in treatment, a single fruit tree of rather rigid type, and a broad, blue sky.

The Christ is clad in white raiment which is decorated with golden cinquefoils and a golden border. The drapery is thrown over the left shoulder so as to display the pierced right side and the wounded hand is raised in the act of blessing. In the left hand he holds a white banner on which is a red cross. The white portions of the banner are ornamented with a fine network of Greek crosses, and the red cross with rows of quatrefoils.

Streams of golden glory emanate from the body of the Christ, and back of his head is a red-crossed golden nimbus. The sarcophagus is decorated with green panels enclosed by a red framework, and its cover has a central red panel. The two soldiers are clad in steel-colored, golden-fringed armor. The one to our left has a blue sword and wears a turban striped red and green. The other rests his right arm upon a shield which

is green with violet stripes. His turban is yellow and blue. The rocky background is deep purple red in color, while the tree has pointed green leaves and large reddish fruit. It may also be noticed that the blue glass in the background is carefully arranged in concentric bands.



FIGURE 2.—THE RESURRECTION: Ghiberti.

If we ask who was the glass-maker who executed this window, the question can be answered from documentary sources. The record is published by Rumohr, *Italienische Forschungen*, II, p. 356. It is copied from the *Archivio dell' Opera del Duomo di Firenze*, Scaffale IV, No. XXV, Libro: *Alloghagione del Opera di Sca. Maria del Fiore al Tempo di ser Nicolajo di . . . di*

Nicholajo di Diedi. Cominciato Anno M.CCCCXXXVIII, fol. 36, die secunda Maji (1443), and reads as follows: "—locha-verunt—Bernardo Francisci, qui facit fenestras de vetro—Duos oculos de vetro in tribuna magna—vid. Unum ex latere destro vid. versus tribunam corporis Christi in quo debet esse resurrexio dñi. nři. Jhs. XPI. secundum designum sibi dandum et debet fieri justa illud incoronatio. Alium vero oculum . . . alia tribuna et justa dcm oculum in quo debet esse quum dominus no. oravit in orto et cum designo sibi dando. quos debet bene laborare arbitrio dñorum operariorum et boni magistri et debet abere pro suo magisterio vitreo tagliatur, et aliis librar. undecim et soldi decem. picc. Operarii predicti promictunt solvere designum, pictorum et ferramenta, facere pontes et alia occurrentia."

This record makes it clear that the execution of the Resurrection window was entrusted to Bernardo di Francesco. The entry seems to have been a tardy one, for we find that some four months earlier Bernardo di Francesco was paid on account 100 l. for this window. The document is published by Dr. Hans Semper, *Mith. d. K. K. Central-Comm.*, 1872, p. 33, and reads as follows: "Die 15 m. Jan. 1442 (43). Bernardo Francisci qui facit fenestras de vetro l. 100 p. parte solutionis unius oculi de tribuna magna in quo est resurrectio domini."

The records thus establish the date of the window and give us the name of the maker, but furnish no direct information concerning the artist who furnished the design. We may observe, however, that the Resurrection window was assigned to Bernardo on the very same day as was the window representing the Agony in the Garden. Now if we turn to Ghiberti's Commentaries, we find this statement concerning the windows he designed for the Cathedral: "Disegnai nella faccia di Sancta Maria del Fiore nell' occhio di mezo l' assumptione di Nostra Donna et disegnai gl' altri, (che) sono dallate. Disegnai in detta chiesa molte finestre di uetro. Nella tribuna sono tre occhi, disegnati di mia mano: Nell' uno e (è) come Christo

(se) ne ua in cielo; nell' altro, quando adora nell' orto; i terzo, quando e (è) portato nel tempio."¹

Ghiberti here lays claim to only three windows in the drum of the cupola; viz. the Ascension, the Agony in the Garden, and the Presentation in the Temple. It is true that the anonymous writer of the manuscript in the Magliabecchiana and Vasari make more sweeping claims for Ghiberti, but do not specifically mention this window. Can it be, therefore, that the Resurrection window was designed by some other hand?

Another author for this window has indeed been suggested, Paolo Uccello. Let us see what evidence there is in his favor. It has already been noted that in 1434 he received some payment from Donatello, probably for coloring the design or the window representing the Coronation of the Virgin. The records published by Semper also show that on the 18th of February, 1443, he was paid for a design for a circular window representing the Annunciation, and on November 5, 1443, for another representing the Nativity, and on January 28, 1445, he received a final payment for painting two circular windows. The latter document reads as follows: "Die 28. Jan. 1444 (45). Paolo Doni Uccello l. 16, s. 10 sunt pro residuo . . . pro suo labore picture duorum oculorum." This document cannot well refer to the Resurrection window, as this window had already been in place for more than two years.

More definite, certainly, are the statements of Milanesi² and Cavallucci,³ both of whom attribute the Resurrection window to Paolo Uccello, but as their affirmations concerning these cathedral windows are not consistent with themselves, nor with

¹ Carl Frey, *Sammlung ausgewählter Biographien Vasari's*: III, *Vita di Lorenzo Ghiberti*, p. 54. Berlin, 1886.

For Ghiberti's Commentaries see also Cicognara, *Storia della Scultura*, IV, pp. 208-225; Rumohr, *Kunstblatt*, 1821, No. 1; *Italianische Forschungen*, I, pp. 289-293; Schorn-Vasari, *Leben der Maler*, II, Abth. I, p. 129; Le Monnier-Vasari, I, pp. xi-xxxvii; Perkins, *Ghiberti et son École*, pp. 113-136.

² Milanesi-Vasari, II, p. 211, note 2.

³ Cavallucci, *Sancta Maria del Fiore e la sua Facciata*, pp. 146-149.

each other, nor with the archives published by Semper, we cannot safely rely upon them.

The documentary evidence may therefore be estimated as follows: Nowhere is it directly affirmed that Ghiberti was the designer of the Resurrection window, nor on the other hand do we know of a document to prove that it was designed by Paolo Uccello. But the dates on which these designs were executed make it probable that during the year 1443 Ghiberti designed all the windows representing the closing scenes of the Life of Christ, while Paolo Uccello designed those concerning the Birth of Christ.

The documentary evidence, at least in the condition in which it is published, being indeterminate, let us consider the window from the point of view of style. We cannot fail to be struck at once with the beautiful and decorative border which serves as a frame for the picture. We recall the beautiful borders which enframe the reliefs in Ghiberti's first and second gates for the Baptistery, and if we look for specific resemblances, they are not wanting. We find the use of the vine-scroll in his earliest relief of the Sacrifice of Isaac (1402); we see it again in the first Baptistery gate decorating the platform on which Pilate is seated (finished 1424), and it appears again between niches and circles on the border of the second Baptistery gate (1424-1452). But more striking than the border is the figure of Christ, with the S-shaped curve of the body and the drapery swinging in what may almost be called the Ghiberti curve. The use of such curves becomes more frequent in Ghiberti's second gates, so that, by 1442, the year when six of these reliefs were being moulded, Ghiberti might be expected to draw just such a figure of Christ as this. We might go farther and point out resemblances between these soldiers and others which Ghiberti represented about this time, and similarly for the rocky background and the fruit tree. But enough has been indicated to show that Ghiberti might have designed this window without changing his general spirit and style.

The case for Uccello would be difficult to substantiate, at least

from a study of his fresco paintings. His chief interest in painting was not decoration, but a scientific, experimental enthusiasm for problems of perspective. The few works known to us from the hand of this artist lack entirely the decorative quality of this design. They present compositions less symmetrical and more complicated, figures which are not characterized by graceful curves, and which are frequently colored without reference to appropriateness or reality. His style is admirably summarized by Bernhard Berenson in *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*, pp. 33-34, as follows: "His real passion was perspective, and painting was to him a mere occasion for solving some problem in this science, and displaying his mastery over difficulties. Accordingly he composed pictures in which he contrived to get as many lines as possible leading the eye inward. Prostrate horses, dead or dying cavaliers, broken lances, ploughed fields, Noah's Arks, were used by him with scarcely an attempt at disguise, to serve his scheme of mathematically converging lines. In his zeal he forgot local color — he loved to paint his horses green or pink — forgot action, forgot composition, and, it need scarcely be added, significance. Thus in his battle pieces, instead of adequate action of any sort, we get the feeling of witnessing a show of stuffed figures whose mechanical movements have been suddenly arrested by some clog in their wires; in his fresco of 'The Deluge' he has so covered his space with demonstrations of his cleverness in perspective and foreshortening that, far from bringing home to us the terrors of a cataclysm, he at the utmost suggests the bursting of a mill-dam; and in the neighboring fresco of the 'Sacrifice of Noah,' just as some capitably constructed figures are about to enable us to realize the scene, all possibility of artistic pleasure is destroyed by our seeing an object in the air which, after some difficulty, we decipher as a human being plunging downward from the clouds. Instead of making this figure, which by the way is meant to represent God the Father, plunge toward us, Uccello deliberately preferred to make it dash inward, away from us,

thereby displaying his great skill in both perspective and foreshortening, but at the same time writing himself down as the founder of two families of painters which have flourished ever since, the artists for dexterity's sake — mental or manual, it scarcely matters — and the naturalists."

Is it likely, we ask, that such a one-sided specialist as Uccello should have produced a design like this, which presents a striking contrast to his other work? It may be unlikely, yet, were we acquainted with his work in painted glass, our notions of his style might be seriously modified. As a boy of ten, he was in Ghiberti's workshop, and in the fulness of manhood he gave Ghiberti assistance in the execution of the second Baptistery gates. It is quite possible that in making cartoons for the windows of the cupola of the Cathedral he would have followed in Ghiberti's footsteps — especially if we assume that the Resurrection window was his first effort.

For a final decision, therefore, as to the designer of this window it will be wise to wait for the opportunity of comparing it with the authenticated windows of Ghiberti on the one hand and of Uccello on the other. This comparison I hope to make as soon as I am free to visit Florence again.

ALLAN MARQUAND.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY,
December, 1899.